[26th March 1954

MR. SPEAKER :—" As both these questions relate to the same subject, they may be taken up together."

Pest attack on betel vine in Salem district.

* 390 *Q.*—SRI S. RAMALINGAM : Will the Hon. the Minister for Agriculture be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the Government have received any memorandum from the Betel Vine Growers of Salem district complaining about pest attack on betel vine in Salem district ; and

(*b*) if so, the action taken to eradicate the pest?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM :—" (*a*) A memorandum from the betel vine growers of Velur, Namakkal of Salem district was received in November 1953.

" (*b*) Even as early as January 1953, on a representation made by Sri K. V. Ramaswami, M.L.A., the Government instructed the Director of Agriculture to assist the growers to combat the disease. A meeting of betel vine growers and landlords and local M.L.As. was convened by the local Agricultural Officer on 5th February 1953 at Velur in Namakkal taluk at which the cause of the betel vine disease and the control measures necessary to eradicate it were explained in detail. Similar demonstrations and propaganda for the control of the disease were held from time to time. The plant protection staff and the local Agricultural staff made frequent visits to the areas from where the disease was reported. On receipt of the representation in November 1953 that the disease has again appeared, the Government asked the Director of Agriculture to intensify propaganda and demonstration in Namakkal taluk and render all assistance to the growers. Besides, to help the poor growers, the Government ordered early in January 1954 that pesticides should be sold to betel vine growers in Namakkal taluk this season at 50 per cent of the cost price. The Government understand that this concession has been widely availed of. The wilting of betel vine is due to a fungus disease which is water and soil borne. It spreads easily from field to field due to irrigation through channel system. The symptoms become perceptible only if the root starts decaying. The growers are being asked by the Department to take timely precaution by the application of lime and spraying of Bordeaux mixture. The Government have instructed the Director of Agriculture to take all measures necessary to help the ryots in this respect."